



# *CITY COUNCIL*

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## ***Public Safety Committee***

**Monday, August 4, 2008**  
**7:00 pm**

**Attendance:** D. Sterner, Chair, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

**Others City Staff Attending:** B. Reinhart, J. Khokhar, W. Heim, S. Katzenmoyer

Dennis Sterner, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m.

### **I. Housing Permit Application Process Update**

Mr. Reinhart reviewed the handout indicating the number of applications in process. He noted that the total number of permits is based on the number of properties who had 2006 housing permits.

Mr. Khokhar noted that 2700+ rental properties have not been inspected within the last three years. He discussed the problems with staffing levels. Mr. Sterner and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that this is a liability issue for the City. Mr. Reinhart noted that a memo was sent to Mr. Churchill indicating that to accomplish the inspections as part of the new housing permit process, 24 inspectors would be needed. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the landlords know the City is having problems and take advantage of the situation. She noted that this backlog began many years ago. There was discussion of some type of temporary permit which could be issued until the inspection takes place. This issue will be discussed with the Legal Department.

Mr. Sterner questioned how long these inspections would take with the current level of staffing. Mr. Reinhart noted that it would take two years to catch up but the City would never get ahead.

Mr. Reinhart noted that Codes currently has so many issues that need improvement and that priorities keep changing. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the work done by Council staff in identifying illegal rentals. She requested that this be discussed in detail at a Work Session. She noted the need to work as a team. She further noted the time invested by Council staff on this

issue. Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that Council staff sees this as assisting in the enforcement phase of the housing permit process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the fire at 161 Clymer St. Ms. Katzenmoyer noted her research showing that this property owner owns ten properties in the City. Only one of the properties has housing permits and the business does not have a business license. Mr. Reinhart noted that he has also begun researching this property.

There was a discussion regarding condemned properties and setting priorities in the Codes Department.

The Committee requested a timeline, cost analysis (revenues and expenses), and problems that have been or may be encountered during the housing permit process, including property inspections.

Mr. Sterner questioned if contracting the inspections out was considered. Mr. Khokhar noted that the possibility was discussed but there are no concrete plans. He expressed his belief that this fee would be higher than the City performing the inspections. Ms. Katzenmoyer noted that this may not be the case when overtime is factored in. Mr. Sterner hoped that this would be seriously considered due to the two year backlog. He suggested bidding the project as a lump sum for a total number of properties rather than a per inspection fee. Mr. Reinhart described problems with contractors during the Pre-Settlement Inspection Reviews. He noted the need for consistency.

Mr. Reinhart informed the Committee about an attorney who is suing area municipalities stating that there should be a charge for a permit only on the year of the inspection; that the fee should not be paid yearly. These municipalities need to prove their costs in Court.

Mr. Sterner suggested holding a special meeting to discuss the housing permit issue with the full body of Council.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the work of the United Way and the Homeless Coalition to assist those displaced from condemned buildings. Mr. Khokhar noted that these agencies cannot interfere in the City's process.

## **II. East Reading Swimming Pool**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the codes violations at the East Reading swimming pool. Mr. Reinhart and Mr. Khokhar noted that they cannot receive special treatment. If the problems are not corrected, citations will be issued. They noted the need for consistency.

### **III. Landlord Education and Lease Agreements**

No report. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz indicated that this issue can be removed from future agendas.

### **IV. Cops and Codes/Codes Sweeps**

Mr. Reinhart noted that joint bar details are done on a monthly basis. He noted that both of these programs have been suspended while Codes begins working on the condemned property problem.

Chief Heim noted that there is good cooperation between the departments. He noted the proactive and highly visible aspects of the programs.

### **V. Bill 51-2008**

Chief Heim noted that the number of police officers was increased to 215 to allow the five additional officers to be hired to receive the State grant. He noted that he has no objections to this ordinance. He noted that there are currently 203 officers and his 2009 budget plan calls for 204.

Mr. Sterner questioned if Fire Chief Rehr had any objections. Ms. Katzenmoyer noted that she would discuss this with him. *Note: Council President Spencer spoke with Chief Rehr. He also had no objections to this ordinance.*

### **VI. Downtown Surveillance Camera Update**

Chief Heim noted that the contracts have been signed. He reported that CelPlan will provide the cameras, computers, and monitoring station. MAU will provide the fiber optic network.

Mr. Sterner questioned when the system would be installed. Chief Heim responded that it would be installed as soon as the equipment was received.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the cameras at the Pagoda would be included in the system. Chief Heim noted that they would not.

Chief Heim noted the need to hire personnel to observe the monitors; one full-time and three part-time.

Mr. Sterner questioned if the funding has been received. Chief Heim noted that the confirmation letter has been received noting a total of \$1.7 million.

Mr. Sterner questioned the cost of running the system. Chief Heim noted his estimation of \$220,000 per year including personnel.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned what the grant would cover. Chief Heim noted that the grant covers the purchase of 25 cameras, the monitoring center, and installation. It does not cover personnel expenses.

Mr. Sterner questioned where the cameras would be located. Chief Heim reported that they would begin on the fringe of the downtown area and extend outward into communities.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the system could tie into private security systems. Chief Heim noted that this will be examined in the future. He noted that the Reading School District has already contacted him. He noted the need for additional monitoring equipment and additional personnel. He will keep Council informed.

## **VII. Graffiti**

The letter from Mike Schorn was reviewed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned the need for additional legislation. Mr. Khokhar indicated that graffiti is now handled through Public Works and Cindy Hemnitz.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if the current graffiti ordinance covered vehicles. The Committee requested that this issue be reviewed by the Legal Department. They further requested Ms. Katzenmoyer research the issue to see if other municipalities have such an ordinance. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the increased use of vehicles to display messages. She noted the need to clearly define what is/is not allowed. *Note: Deputy Chief Talbot believes that the City's current graffiti ordinance covers vehicles.*

The Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by  
Shelly Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk*

## **Follow Up Items**

- Mobile Food Vendor Ordinance amendment – Shelly Katzenmoyer and Brad Reinhart
- Housing Permit Process – Jatinder Khokhar and Brad Reinhart
- City Hall Security